## MMR_0313 John H. Tews (former Director of Trainfest in Milwaukee)

Under John Tews' leadership and vision, Trainfest has become a top-tier Milwaukee attraction and a national model railroading event. His philosophy has elevated Trainfest from a small show to a quality "must-see" event, highlighting the best model railroading has to offer. John has served as Trainfest's Executive Director for the past 22 of the event's 42 consecutive years.

During John's time as Executive Director, Trainfest has grown from the 75,000 sq. ft. East and North Exhibit Halls to fill 200,000 sq. ft. in the Exhibition Center at State Fair Park. Trainfest attendance has grown from 12,000-13,000 to heights of over 25,000. Over its forty plus years, the show exhibitors have grown and developed. In 2013 Trainfest showcased 70 detailed, operating model railroad displays and scenic reproductions, 70 manufacturers, 60 hobby dealers and 12 historical groups.

What differentiates Trainfest from swap meets or other model railroad shows across the country is the detailed craftsmanship of the layouts, availability of top-tier products direct from manufacturers, and the wide variety of products from hobby shops.

John works year-round to assure the quality of the show, and that passion is apparent in each nook and cranny where track is laid at Trainfest. No detail is unimportant. John painstakingly designs the show floor plan in his CAD program, carving ample space for the layouts, clinics, demonstrations, and manufacturer's showcase. He guarantees that the aisles are wide so visitors in strollers and wheelchairs can get close to each display. A volunteer himself, he enthusiastically set the tone and rallies the all-volunteer workforce to keep Trainfest running smoothly.

Over its 42 year history, Trainfest has inspired both experienced modelers and young train fans alike. John's efforts as Executive Director have worked to ensure that inspiration endures, furthering the model railroading hobby into the future. One such way John has reached out to the youngest potential modelers is by expanding the offering of kids' activities including train races, trains operated by kids, a circus train ride, and a LEGO® train layout.

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Over the years, he has systematically expanded and upgraded the show and standardized its business practices. With almost 37 years as a project manager at Wisconsin Electric Power, it has been John's vision and experience that has kept Trainfest fun and financially viable.

His passion has been nurtured by the longstanding marriage between Milwaukee and model railroading. Milwaukee is the birthplace of the National Model Railroad Association (NMRA), which celebrated its 75th anniversary in 2010. The Wisconsin Southeastern (WISE) Division of the NMRA initially sponsored Trainfest, and still does today. Trainfest is the largest event staged by the WISE Division.

John was awarded NMRA's elite Master Model Railroader status, an achievement only attained by a few accomplished modelers in the United States and he remains the only MMR in the Southeast Wisconsin... in fact, all of Wisconsin for over 20 years.

In 2010, John was awarded the Bobbye Hall Award for distinguished service to the model railroad industry. Also in 2010, John was recognized by CBS 58 "Making Milwaukee Great" for his work crafting Trainfest into a premier Milwaukee event.

The "John H. Tews, MMR, Spirit of Model Railroading Award" was established November 2011 by the Trainfest Committee as an annual award to recognize individuals and organizations for their dedication to the hobby of model railroading and Trainfest as exhibited by the leadership and commitment of John H. Tews, MMR. John received the inaugural award on November 11, 2011.

Looking to the future, since making the decision to retire as Trainfests' Executive Director, John is looking forward to spending more time with his wife, Nancy, and his family, as well as completing a number of projects on his lake home and continuing work on his personal layout after a long hiatus, the Timber River Railway. The Timber River Railway was featured in the November 1992 issue of *Model Railroader* magazine.



**In addition, John's Timber River Railway may be viewed on YouTube. John is a supremely dedicated model railroder and a tremendous ambassador for the hobby. He is a credit to himself and the NMRA.**